



Energy policy and climate change

Studying energy for a sustainable future

Commentary:

If you're interested in learning more about the issues discussed on this album, the Open University course T206 'Energy for a sustainable future' might be just what you are looking for. Godfrey Boyle is a long-standing member of the course team.

Godfrey Boyle

T206 attempts to convey a good understanding on the part of students of the energy system, both in the UK and in Europe and in the world as a whole, and its dependence on fossil fuels, nuclear fuels, renewable energy and the potential for energy saving in buildings and in transport, and in all of those ways in which, and the ways in which the environmental impacts, whether it be in terms of carbon emissions or other emissions can be minimised, it's a second level undergraduate course as part of the OU's undergraduate programme, and it's been going now since 2003, and it's been very successful. We get very high, five hundred students a year studying it, and they all seem to be very satisfied and have very high student satisfaction figures and, in fact, the material that we produced for it, the big text books, not only are they used by the students on the course but they've also been very widely adopted over the world in other universities and by other people as well, so it's an example of Open University material being disseminated worldwide as well as being used within the OU, which is quite gratifying.00 52

Commentary:

The course is very accessible, and addresses the needs of a wide range of students.

Godfrey Boyle:

Open University students vary hugely in their nature and their motivation, I guess. I mean it would vary from people who were just interested in the problems of climate change and the need to move to a more sustainable energy system just from a personal interest point of view. A lot of people are taking it though as the background to professional qualifications. They want to become energy analysts or energy specialists, they're people in the Civil Service, both at national and local levels who take it, there are consultants, or people who want to become consultants who are taking it

There are four main blocks of the course each sort of eight, nine weeks long, and in the first one you study fossil, *and* the nuclear fuels, taking as much as anything a historical point of view, we look at the history of them as well as the existing technologies that are currently applied, and we look at ways in which the environmental impacts of fossil and, to some extent, nuclear fuels could be reduced by improved technologies and better management. So and then we move on to the renewable energy sources – the solar, the wind, the wave, tidal, biofuels, and how they can be integrated into the energy system. Then we look at energy saving in buildings and in transport, and how we can make our buildings and our vehicles a lot more efficient in the use of energy, so therefore having a much lower environmental impact for every use, you know to a fuel that was burned. And then in the final part of the course we look at energy futures and at a both European and a world level

Commentary:

Course materials are delivered using a mix of media, from traditional texts to a web based virtual learning environment.

Godfrey Boyle:

on the virtual learning environment there's also these forums where you can discuss with other students and with your tutor any problems that come up and discuss the assignments and generally have a chat, and I think these are very, very popular with the students. In

addition to that the students can go to tutorials in local study centres if they want to, the other media available on the course are these DVD's that, one of which we're discussing. Also the software we give the students, simple software in which they can build simple models of renewable energy systems, and play around with them and see what the effects of changing various variables is, and looking also at the finances, the economics of renewables, we give them software to enable them to do that

Commentary:

If you'd like to learn more, or would like to register for the course, click on the Study T206 link at the top of the album page.